Ohio and the World, 1753-2053

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In the summer of 1765, George Croghan, a British trader and Indian agent from Pennsylvania, passed across southern Ohio on his way to meet with Indians in Illinois. He kept a lengthy journal on his trip and described Ohio as a “fine open country . . . a delightful prospect . . . on all sides level, rich, and well watered . . . trees covered with grape vines . . . the soil on the banks of the Scioto, for a vast distance up the country is prodigious rich . . . buffaloes, bears, turkeys with all other kinds of wild game are extremely plenty . . . a good hunter, without much fatigue to himself, could here supply daily one hundred men with meat.”

Native American people undoubtedly agreed. From time immemorial they had occupied the green hills and fertile valleys of the Ohio country, and some, such as the “Chouwanas,” the Shawnees, the “People of the South,” considered the Ohio Valley to be the very “Center of the Earth,” the place created by the Master of Life for his people. This vast tract of land, stretching from the shores of Lake Erie in the north to the Ohio River in the south; and from the northward curve of the Ohio and its tributaries in the east, to the watersheds of the Maumee and Great Miami in the west, would be the home of many Indian people, who would (and still do) hold this land dear. Here they made their homes, and they erected their great earthen mounds, and they planted their cornfields; and here they fought, and they died, in an attempt to keep Ohio “Indian Country.” Native Americans in this state have made a major contribution, not only to the history of Ohio, but also to the history of this nation.

In the pre-Columbian period, Ohio history is the history of Native American people, and contrary to popular opinion they were not all hunters and gatherers who scattered over the countryside shooting arrows at rabbits.
Chapter 1

In Ohio and elsewhere, Indian people established sophisticated, complex societies, maintained extensive trade networks, and erected monumental public works. In other words, neither American history nor the history of Ohio begins in 1492; indeed, in chronological terms, most of humankind’s history in this state precedes that date.

Tribal peoples’ entrance into Ohio dates to the far distant past, at least 20,000 years ago, but by about 500 A.D. the Adena People in southern Ohio were cultivating crops, beginning to build large earthen mounds, and spreading their influence up and down the Ohio River and some of its tributaries. The Adena settlements were centered along the Scioto River, and although they soon were eclipsed by the more numerous and effusive Hopewellian culture, the Adena people flourished between about 600 B.C. and 300 A.D., and represent the first of the mound-building societies to emerge in, or occupy Ohio.3

The Hopewell Culture, which partially emerged from the Adena and spread throughout much of the eastern United States, flourished in Ohio from circa 300 B.C., to 550 A.D. Like the Adena people, the Hopewellians also were mound-builders whose beautifully crafted flint and quartz blades, skillfully carved stone pipes, ceramic figurines, and artistically fashioned implements and jewelry made from raw copper suggest a specialization of labor associated with settled, more sophisticated societies. These commodities were carried and exchanged over trade routes that stretched from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the southern Appalachians to as far west as Yellowstone Park. Although the Hopewellian people grew corn, it initially seems to have been used more for ceremonial purposes than as a staple of their diet, but they were able to sustain a series of population and ceremonial centers characterized by large earthen mounds, many of which served as places of internment. Moreover, archaeologists such as Bradley Lepper have suggested that the Hopewellian people also constructed roads which connected important ceremonial or political locations.4

Obviously, the construction of roads, large burial mounds, and other public monuments suggests a social-political hierarchy and a degree of social control which usually are associated with “civilized societies,” as does Serpent Mound, the one-quarter-mile-long earthen effigy mound erected in modern Adams County. Archaeologists still argue over its origin, but there is strong evidence to indicate that it is of relatively recent construction (in archaeological terms), and represents an outpost of Mississippian culture which spread into Ohio from Cahokia, the walled Mississippian city located across the river from modern St. Louis.5 Flourishing in about 1100 A.D., Cahokia and its suburbs encompassed a population of over twenty thousand people. It included over one hundred twenty separate mounds, including
Monks Mound, the largest earth structure north of Mexico, broad plazas, markets, and temples. The inner city was contained within an immense wall palisade (complete with defensive towers and bastions) constructed of over twenty thousand logs. The city’s wall stretched for two miles, towered to fifteen feet, and enclosed an inner core of about four hundred acres. Archaeologists speculate that people living within the Fort Ancient complex in southern Ohio may have served as a distant satellite to Cahokia, supplying products from Ohio, or from Iroquois-speaking people to the east.6

In retrospect, if Ohio’s pre-Columbian peoples are envisioned within the broader spectrum of other societies around the world, it becomes obvious that they form part of a world-wide pattern associated with early “civilized” societies in Africa and Eurasia. Similar to emerging complex societies in Asia and Africa, the Adena, Hopewellian, and Mississippian people erected their towns and ceremonial centers along the banks of major river systems. While their Old World counterparts used the Tigris, Euphrates, Ganges, and the Nile, the ancient Americans utilized the Ohio, the Mississippi, and their tributaries. Many of these societies, in both the Old World and the New, erected great monuments to honor their gods, or as resting places for their dead. The Egyptians raised the Pyramids, the Sphinx, and the temples at Karnack; the Assyrians built temples to Baal and Astarte, or a tomb for Sennacharib. The people of early Ohio fashioned effigy mounds, including an immense earthen serpent, with an egg in its mouth, or they buried dead leaders, surrounded by luxury goods, in mounds whose construction required the labor of hundreds (or even thousands) of individuals over extended periods of time. Moreover, emerging complex societies on both sides of the Atlantic seem to have been ruled by priest-kings, whose political authority probably was vested in their combination of church and state. Granted, the Adena, Hopewellian, and Mississippian peoples did not expand their political dominion into empires similar to the political entities in Egypt, Rome, or the Fertile Crescent, but the Hopewellian people, and certainly the Mississippians, formed virtual “city-states” that dominated local regions and brought neighboring people under their influence and hegemony; and as the walls of Cahokia and Fort Ancient illustrate, they, too, were forced to defend their treasures and resources from American Goths, Gauls, and “barbarians.” And finally, like the early cultures of Egypt, the Mediterranean, or the Middle East, the complex societies of pre-Columbian Ohio also emerged, flourished for hundreds of years, and eventually declined.

Indeed, regardless of how Ohio history or American history has often been presented, neither started when the first European entered the region.
Far from being an isolated backwater, where nothing really happened, both Ohio and the larger region that would become the United States participated in a worldwide pattern of human existence and cultural development. Native American people both shared in, and contributed to, that pattern.

Yet if such was the case, and if these societies were so sophisticated and successful, what happened to them? Why do modern Ohioans converse in English rather than in Shawnee, or one of the Siouan languages? Why is the dominant culture of modern Ohio and the United States a European society that has been transplanted from across the Atlantic? Several factors account for the decline of Native American influence. Most important was Native American susceptibility to Old World diseases, but European superiority in metallurgy and armaments, and the Europeans’ hierarchical political systems also contributed to the Indian demise. Still, during the colonial period, and in the decade immediately following the American Revolution, the political future of both Ohio and the new American nation hung in the balance, and in both cases it was Native American people who possessed the power to tip the scales.7

Ironically, however, during the latter half of the seventeenth century, when European influence began to first permeate the Ohio Country, the region was devoid of most of its Native American population. Well armed by Dutch and British traders, between 1647 and 1684 the Iroquois expanded westward, seeking to dominate the fur trade and bring the midwestern tribes under their control. In the 1650s Iroquois warriors overwhelmed the Eries, a little known tribe living along the southern shores of the lake that bears their name. Following the Eries’ dispersal the Shawnees fled southern Ohio and sought refuge in the South, or in Illinois. In a similar flight, the Miamis abandoned the villages in western Ohio and joined other refugees in Illinois, or in the Green Bay-Fox River region of Wisconsin. Consequently, during much of the latter half of the seventeenth century, Ohio remained devoid of any significant Indian population.8

But this vacuum did not last for long. By 1700 the French and western tribes had mounted a series of countercampaigns and had pushed the Iroquois out of the western Great Lakes and Wabash-Maumee watersheds. In the four decades that followed, the Miamis reestablished themselves near French posts at Detroit then scattered down the Maumee-Wabash portage, while Shawnees began to reoccupy the lower Scioto Valley. Meanwhile, Delaware villagers, uprooted from their ancestral homes in eastern Pennsylvania, spilled over the Appalachians and erected new towns downstream from the forks of the Ohio. The Delawares were joined by a new group, the Mingos, sometimes called the “Ohio Iroquois,” who comprised splinter groups from the Senecas, Cayugas, and refugees from tribes such as
the Mohicans, Eries, and Susquehannas. These people occupied a series of small villages in eastern Ohio stretching from the mouth of the Muskingum to the Cuyahoga Valley.9

American historians interested in the subject often have portrayed the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century, particularly the decades leading to the French and Indian War, as a monumental struggle between the British and French for control of North America. Within the broader realm of this contest, Native American people sometimes have been pictured as pawns in a diplomatic and military chess game, expendable pieces manipulated by colonial powers attempting to acquire allies and strategic locations to bolster their cause. But these erstwhile pawns also formed grand strategies of their own, and if they were used by the Europeans, they also manipulated these “men with hairy faces” for their own ends. Ohio served as the focus of much of this activity.10

In 1747 Ohio assumed center stage in this drama after part of the Hurons, fleeing an intertribal dispute at Detroit, relocated to the Sandusky Bay region. At Sandusky, these Hurons killed several French traders and flirted with British traders from Pennsylvania. The “Huron Revolt” spread to the Maumee Valley where Miamis pillaged other French traders, and although the French were able to disperse the Hurons (by then known as Wyandots) at Sandusky, part of the dissident Miamis formed a new village, Pickawillany, at the juncture of Loramie’s Creek and the Great Miami River near modern Piqua. Led by Dragonfly (to the French: La Demoiselle; to the British: Old Briton), these Miamis welcomed traders from Pennsylvania, and their village soon became a center for British trade in western Ohio. Meanwhile, Indians from as far west as Illinois journeyed to Pickawillany, offering pelts to British traders.11

Angered by the Miamis, the French repeatedly ordered La Demoiselle and his followers to return to the Maumee or Wabash, but the Indians had an agenda of their own. By the 1750s the Indian population in Ohio was comprised primarily of refugees, people who had either fled British control in the east, or had moved back into the region to be free of French hegemony. They wanted access to European trade goods, but they wanted no part of European governments. At Pickawillany, La Demoiselle and his followers believed they were immune from French military power, yet accessible to British traders such as George Croghan and William Trent, who could reach their village from Pennsylvania. In eastern Ohio, Mingo, Shawnee, and Delaware tribespeople also had access to British trade goods, and they remained loosely allied with the colonial government of Pennsylvania; however, they also functioned as autonomous communities, separated from both British control and British settlers by the Appalachian
Mountains. Moreover, these eastern Ohio tribesmen used the threat of possible ties with the French as a “bargaining chip” to protect their autonomy from Pennsylvania.12

Ironically however, La Demoiselle’s growing ties with British traders upset the fragile balance. The French envisioned the Ohio Valley as a dagger poised at the soft underbelly of New France. If the British gained control of the upper Ohio, the river would serve as an avenue of penetration through which British influence and political power could reach the Illinois Country and separate Louisiana from the western Great Lakes. Aware that they could not compete with the British in terms of trade goods, the French flexed their military muscle. First, in 1749, they dispatched Pierre Joseph Celoron and 265 men from Montreal to the upper Allegheny, then down the Ohio to the mouth of the Great Miami, which Celoron ascended to Pickawillany. En route, Celoron attempted to impress the Indians whom he encountered with French military power, but he met with only limited success. At Pickawillany, Celoron warned La Demoiselle that he should return to the Wabash, but the Miami chief was ambiguous in his reply, and since La Demoiselle could muster as many fighting men as Celoron, the Frenchman was forced to return to Detroit without him. Yet Celoron’s expedition illustrated that the French could project military power into the region, and both the Miami and the tribes in eastern Ohio sought assurances from Pennsylvania of military assistance. In response, the Quaker-dominated Pennsylvania Assembly sent trade goods and other supplies to the Indians, but they opposed military alliances and refused to dispatch troops or build military posts in the region.13

Virginia, on the other hand, stepped into the void, but the tribes in eastern Ohio were more wary of the Virginians than the French. The Ohio Company of Associates, operating out of Virginia, had long cast greedy eyes on the Ohio Country, and Mingo, Delaware, and Shawnee tribespeople were aware of their land hunger. Unlike the Pennsylvanians who had focused primarily on the fur trade, the Virginians, the “Chomokomon,” or “Long Knives,” were “land animals,” eager to speculate in the upper Ohio Valley, and the Delawares had been pushed westward by Englishmen already. They disliked the Virginians, and by 1752 many Native Americans in eastern Ohio, formerly allied to Pennsylvania and the British, were moving back toward a position of neutrality.

Events in western Ohio gave impetus to their decision. Angered over La Demoiselle’s refusal to return to Indiana, and by his continued ties to the Pennsylvania traders, in 1752 French officials sent a large war party of Ottawas, Ojibwas, and Potawatomis led by Charles Langlade, a métis of Ottawa and French descent, against Pickawillany. They struck the village on
June 21st, surprising the Miamis and the British traders in their midst. La Demoiselle, his advisers, and most of the British traders were captured or surrendered; Langlade ordered their execution. The village was burned, the Miami corn fields were destroyed, and most of the surviving Miamis were forced to accompany the French back to the Maumee-Wabash waterway.\textsuperscript{14}

Langlade’s raid on Pickawillany did not end French efforts in the Ohio country. In 1753, less than one year later, an expedition led by Paul Marin crossed over the Niagara portage and began the construction of a string of forts stretching toward the forks of the Ohio. Mingos in northeastern Ohio protested the French entrance into the region, but their kinsmen at Logstown and other villages downstream from the forks seemed less concerned about the French than the Virginians. When Virginia sent a small detachment of militia to demand that the French return to Canada, the commander, a young Virginian named George Washington, received scant support from the tribes in eastern Ohio.\textsuperscript{15}

The European military expeditions into the Ohio Country illustrate that both the British and the French regarded Ohio as a key region in their ongoing struggle for control of the American interior, and they probably envisioned the tribes as pawns in this contest. Yet the Miamis, Wyandots, Shawnees, and Mingos also manipulated the European powers in order to
maintain both economic prosperity and political autonomy. Their ultimate failure during this late colonial period was caused not by any lack of sophistication, but by factors beyond their control. The tribes in eastern Ohio, particularly, continued to walk a tightrope between the British and French throughout the French and Indian War (1756–1763), carefully assessing which side seemed to be pre-eminent, and then supporting them. But they perceptively understood that the primary threat to their lands and autonomy came from neither of these European governments, but from British colonists. Ministers in Whitehall or Versailles would never spill onto their lands; not so frontiersmen and land speculators from Virginia.

The extent of this threat became evident even before the French and Indian War ended. Resentful of British colonists trespassing on their lands, many Ohio tribespeople enlisted in the widespread Indian rebellion usually associated with Pontiac, an Ottawa war chief at Detroit. The revolt, which flared throughout the summer of 1763, eventually failed, but ironically, the Ohio tribes still bore little ill will toward the British Indian Department. But in the decade following the Peace of Paris, which ended the French and Indian War, the British government and its American colonies moved toward war, and the tribes grew even more hostile to the American colonists. As Virginians spilled across the Appalachians into Kentucky and southeastern Ohio, the Shawnees fought back. Although the Virginians won a temporary victory at the battle of Point Pleasant, in 1774, the Shawnees were not conquered. They remained determined to defend their villages along the Scioto. In the armistice that followed the Shawnee setback at Point Pleasant, the Shawnees reluctantly agreed to allow the Long Knives to cross onto their hunting lands in Kentucky, but they envisioned this latter provision as only a temporary aberration. The Virginians would settle Kentucky at their own risk; there would be little peace in the Ohio Country.16

Not surprisingly, when war between the King and the colonists erupted two years later, the Ohio tribes rallied to the British cause. They harbored no great love for the British, but they saw the conflict as an opportunity to reestablish a new balance of power between contesting groups of white men, and to rid themselves of the Long Knives. In turn, British officials reminded them that the Crown had done its best to keep the colonists off tribal lands, even passing the Proclamation of 1763, forbidding the colonists to cross beyond the crest of the Appalachians. Yet according to British agents, “the king’s disobedient children” had defied their father and had moved west on their own accord; the war had begun because the King had attempted to control and punish his unruly brood, who now threatened the tribal homelands.17
The Shawnees needed little goading. In 1776 they and their allies from Ohio and Indiana fell upon the Kentucky settlements with a vengeance, and although the Long Knives took shelter in log stockades, war parties burned crops and killed or captured livestock. From the American perspective, things worsened in 1777 (known as the “Bloody Year” in Kentucky) as war parties swept through the Blue Grass region, preventing the settlers from planting or caring for crops. By the fall of 1777 the Kentuckians were reduced to living off game or what they could scrounge in the forests. In February 1778, a Shawnee war party surprised and captured Daniel Boone and several other frontiersmen at a salt camp on the Licking River, carrying Boone back to the Shawnee village at Chillicothe. Boone later escaped and made his way back to Kentucky, but during the summer of 1778 the Shawnee besieged and nearly captured Boonesborough. The war temporarily turned in the Americans’ favor in 1778 after George Rogers Clark captured the Illinois Country. In 1779 John Bowman and the Kentucky militia conducted raids into Ohio and attacked Shawnee villages at Chillicothe, but were repulsed after killing only two Indians (one of them, however, was Blackfish, the Shawnee war chief).18

Ironically, 1778–1779 marked the high point of American success, for in 1780 the warfare in the west again turned in the Indians’ favor. In 1780 Captain Henry Bird led a British expedition from Detroit, and assisted by Shawnees, Wyandots, and other tribesmen, they dragged a cannon across Ohio, floated it across the Ohio River on a raft, and in June, 1780, after blasting apart these forts’ palisades, captured two small posts or “stations” in Kentucky. Bird obtained so many prisoners he eventually had to retreat back to Ohio, but the prospect of Shawnee war parties supported by British artillery so unsettled the Americans, that George Rogers Clark was forced to return from the Illinois Country to organize a new defense. Finding the Kentuckians much demoralized, Clark was forced to conscript an expedition to follow in Bird’s wake. Late in the summer of 1780 they burned some Shawnee villages near Piqua, but the Indians remained undaunted and continued to raid Kentucky.19

The fighting continued, but during the remaining three years of the war (1780–1783), the Indians and their British allies remained on the offensive and generally carried the conflict to the Americans. In 1782, for example, after peaceful Moravian Delawares were slaughtered by American militia units at Gnaddenhutten, the Wyandots, Shawnees, and other Delawares intercepted an American expedition en route toward Detroit, soundly defeated their enemy, then took a terrible revenge on the survivors. Indeed, during the seven years of the American Revolution the Americans remained on the defensive except for two years (1778–1779), and when the
war ended Ohio remained Indian country, while those Kentuckians who had not fled back across the mountains to Virginia continued to huddle in their log forts, subsisting on game and what they could gather in the forest.

In retrospect, the Native Americans and British won the Revolutionary War in Ohio. They carried the war to their enemies, forced many settlers to abandon their homes in Kentucky, and prevented any American settlements north of the Ohio River. The Shawnees, Wyandots, and other Ohio tribes did not see themselves as losers in the contest, and their assumption of success had a profound impact on events in Ohio in the decade following the war.20

The new American government disagreed. American officials regarded themselves as the victors, and their grandiose plans for the Ohio Country presaged the bloodiest chapter in the history of Indian-white warfare in all of American history. In the Anglo-American treaty ending the war, the British ceded political title over almost all the territory (including Ohio) east of the Mississippi to the new United States. Yet the Americans assumed that this political cession included the very ownership of the lands themselves—that the British government, not the tribes, actually owned Ohio, and that now the title to the lands belonged to the American government.

In response, the tribes initially were dumbfounded. First of all, from their perspective they had won, not lost, the war, and the Americans were in no position to dictate terms to them. Secondly, the tribes strongly asserted that they had never ceded control of their lands to anyone, not the French, nor the British, and therefore the latter could not hand title to Ohio over to the Americans. And finally, when they questioned British Indian agents about the treaty, the agents assured them that although their Father, the King, might temporarily have relinquished his political hegemony over the region, the royal government had never laid claims to their lands, and that therefore the American claims were unjustified. This final assertion, of course, was predicated on the British belief that the new American nation would be of short duration, and the Crown would soon reassert its control over the region. Such an assumption also emboldened the British to retain forts at Detroit and Michillimackinac, posts to facilitate their reconquest of the region and their continued control of the fur trade.21

The Americans needed the lands in Ohio. During the war they had deferred paying wages to the Continental Army, and they hoped to pay off their debts by providing veterans of the war with tracts of land (“military bounty lands”) in Ohio. Moreover, in the post-revolutionary period many influential men in the new government dabbled in western land speculation, and Ohio seemed to offer excellent opportunities. John Jay described the region west of the Appalachians as:
fertile, widespread country . . . blessed with a variety of soils and productions and watered with innumerable streams, for the delight and accommodation of its inhabitants. A succession of navigable waters forms a kind of chain around its borders, as if to bind it together; while the most noble rivers in the world, running at convenient distances, present . . . highways for the easy communication and . . . transportation and exchange of their various commodities.22

Both Jay and Alexander Hamilton argued that the new national government should exert control over Ohio. They believed that both the British in Canada and the Spaniards in Louisiana remained a threat to the region and that “the savage tribes on our western frontier ought to be regarded as our natural enemies, their [the British and Spaniards’] natural allies, because they have most to fear from us, and most to hope from them.” In addition, Jay, Hamilton, and other Federalists were eager to see the national government extend its hegemony in the region as part of their plans to increase the power of a centralized, federal government in contrast to old colonial (now state) claims to the region.23

In consequence, between 1784 and 1789 government officials attempted to gain Indian acquiescence to American claims in the region, but they achieved little success. In 1784, at the Second Treaty of Ft. Stanwix, the Iroquois gave up their lands in the region, but since they really owned no lands west of Pennsylvania, the treaty was meaningless. One year later, at Fort McIntosh, intoxicated delegates from the Wyandot, Delaware, and Detroit tribes gave up their claim to part of the state, but the vast majority of their tribes denounced the treaty signatories and refused to abide by it. In 1786, at Fort Finney, a few Shawnees also agreed to a land cession, but most residents of the Ohio Valley, both Indian and white, believed that the treaty had little meaning. Finally, by 1789, federal officials acquiesced to the Native American position that the tribes did own the soil, but they asserted that the Indians would have to sell it to the government. When Indian agents then informed the Shawnees that they wanted tribal leaders to meet with them on the Muskingum so that officials could purchase the tribe’s lands, the Shawnees replied that if federal agents dared to appear at the designated treaty location, they would kill them. Officials wisely decided to hold the negotiations within the more friendly confines of Fort Harmar, where a handful of Wyandots and Shawnees and members of several Michigan tribes signed a treaty relinquishing lands in Ohio, although the Shawnees, Miamis, and other Ohio tribes declared the agreement invalid. Even George Morgan, an American Indian agent at the treaty declared:
These abortive treaties did not solve the problem. During the late 1780s, as American settlers attempted to settle lands north of the Ohio, the Shawnees, Miamis, and other tribes burned cabins, stole livestock, and took both scalps and prisoners. Flatboats descending the Ohio were ambushed, and those settlements that managed to survive north of the river were kept under an almost constant state of siege. Expeditions from Kentucky attacked Shawnee villages along the Mad River, but succeeded only in killing the few members of the tribe who previously had befriended the Long Knives. In response, Shawnee raids against shipping on the Ohio increased.25

Convinced that the carrot of cooperation had failed, the federal government decided to use the stick of coercion. In 1790 General Josiah Harmar and over 1,400 men left Fort Washington, at the site of modern Cincinnati, and marched north toward the Indian towns along the Maumee. They reached the Fort Wayne region in mid-October before being twice ambushed by war parties of Miamis, Wyandots, Potawatomis, and Shawnees, then withdrew back to Cincinnati. Harmar lost over 180 men; Indian losses in these battles were minimal.26

One year later, Arthur St. Clair, the governor of the Northwest Territory, tried his luck. The result was even more disastrous. St. Clair also proceeded north from Fort Washington, and by November 4, 1791 he had reached the headwaters of the Wabash in modern Mercer County, where early in the morning his camp was surrounded and attacked by an immense war party. The battle raged until about 10:00 A.M., when St. Clair and the American survivors broke through the Indian lines and fled for their lives. Some of the militia who escaped with St. Clair were so panic-stricken that within twenty-four hours they had retreated the same distance it had taken them seven days to march prior to the battle. St. Clair’s casualties numbered at least 630 killed and 232 wounded. Many women and children who had accompanied the army north from Cincinnati also were killed or captured, but their number remains unknown. St. Clair’s defeat was the largest single loss of life ever sustained by the United States army in its warfare with Native Americans.27
Indian morale soared, and encouraged by the tribal victories, the British erected a new post, Fort Miami, just upstream from modern Toledo. The British also offered, to the Americans’ great annoyance, to assist the United States to establish a permanent autonomous Indian state north of the Ohio. Meanwhile, renewed American attempts to negotiate a peace were spurned by the tribesmen who believed that they now held the upper hand. In 1793, when American agents offered to give up the government’s claims to almost all of Ohio, except for those lands east of the Muskingum, an area already settled by American citizens, and to pay the tribes a large amount of cash, tribal spokesmen replied that the government should use the money to pay all settlers to leave Ohio, since it would be cheaper than raising and equipping another expedition which also would be defeated by their warriors.28

In retrospect, by late 1793 the fate of the Ohio Country again hung in the balance. Encouraged by the British, and by their recent victories over the Long Knives, the tribespeople felt they could hold the region against the Americans. Once again, by balancing one group of white men against the other, they hoped to preserve both their homeland and their autonomy. But like La Demoiselle at Pickawillany, and those warriors who had been allied with the Redcoats during the Revolution, they overestimated the depth of the British commitment. Although local British Indian agents had assured them that their British father would never again forget his red children, Britain was much involved in an ongoing struggle against post–revolutionary France; she did not want an additional conflict with the United States. During 1793, Anthony Wayne rebuilt the American army in the west, and in 1794 he also marched north toward the tribal villages now clumped along the Maumee and Auglaize rivers. An ill-advised and untimely attack against Fort Recovery (built near the site of St. Clair’s debacle) split the Indian ranks. When Wayne reached the Maumee in August, 1794, the tribes had quarreled among themselves, and many of the Shawnees’ allies had abandoned them. Still, the tribal defenders of Ohio believed that they could turn back the Americans at Fallen Timbers, where a tornado had felled a grove of trees just upstream from Fort Miami, the newly erected British fort. But Wayne’s well-disciplined army carried the day, and when the warriors withdrew to the fort, intending to make another stand inside the palisades, the British commander refused them entry. As Tecumseh, the renowned Shawnee war chief later stated, “the gates were shut fast against us.” Again, the Crown had misled them. Demoralized, the warriors retreated west into Michigan and Indiana, or east along the shores of Lake Erie while Wayne burned their towns and cornfields.29 Three months later, in November 1794, American and British representatives
The Treaty of Greenville, 1795. Painted by Howard Chandler Christy and commissioned to celebrate the sesquicentennial of the treaty, the color painting hangs in the Ohio Statehouse. The treaty ended Native American resistance to white encroachment into Ohio. Courtesy, The Ohio Historical Society, SC 404, folder 1.
signed Jay’s Treaty in which the British agreed to relinquish all their western posts and honor their pledge to withdraw to Canada. Defeated, less than one year later the Ohio tribes agreed to the Treaty of Greenville, ceding all of Ohio but the northwest quadrant to the United States. Led by Tecumseh and the Shawnee Prophet, two decades later the tribes would again ally themselves with the British and make a final, desperate stand, but by then they were so outnumbered that the outcome was a forgone conclusion. The battle was lost. Ohio no longer was “Indian Country.”

For many Native Americans the loss was tragic. The Shawnees believed that the Ohio Valley was the “Center of the Earth,” and that the rest of the earth radiated out from it. Taking their identity from their homeland, they were willing to die to defend it. Like other tribal people in the region, the Shawnees attempted to walk a fine line between contesting European or American governments who also laid claim to the region. Like many modern, non-Indian citizens of Ohio who have spent their entire life in the state, and whose parents lived there before them, they envisioned the region as their home. Native Americans also were Ohioans, but their connection to the land itself transcended what most modern American feel for the region in which they live. The descendants of the Shawnees who still reside in this state (and who continue to identify themselves as Shawnee people) still do identify with the land.

Obviously, Native Americans, Euro-Americans, and Ohio itself were all shaped by warfare. Ohio was, and is, a rich, fertile, and strategic region in the heartland of America. Blood was spilled to both conquer and defend it. Thus, Native American people have both shaped and shared in the history of Ohio, and the history of the United States. Too often American history is portrayed as primarily the history of white Europeans. Yet a broader analysis of both the history of Ohio and of the United States, particularly the history of the pre-Columbian period through the eighteenth century, indicates that such an emphasis is incorrect. In retrospect, the entire span of American history is not a white cake with considerable marbling in its most recent layer. Indeed, in chronological terms, American history is instead, a rich, brown, multi-layered, German chocolate cake, with a white coconut icing.

NOTES

Chapter 1


7. For a general discussion of these issues, see Alfred Crosby, The Columbian Exchange (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971), passim.


10. Although popular writers often depict Native Americans referring to Europeans as “pale faces,” etc., at first tribal people rarely commented on the Europeans’ lighter complexions. Much more common, however, was their commentary upon the Europeans’ heavy beards and their more profuse body hair.


Chapter 1


“Pioneers Crossing the Ohio River.” The federal government funded local artists affected by the Depression to paint murals for the United States Postal Service as part of the New Deal. Michael Lowe painted this mural in 1941 for the Amherst (Ohio) post office. It depicts the migration of people into Ohio in the years following the Treaty of Greenville (1795). The original mural is oil on canvas and measures 41/2 x 14 feet. Courtesy, The Ohio Historical Society, AV 48, box 1, folder 2.